

Dear Editor:

The Governor's budget proposal for the upcoming state fiscal year relies on a variety of reforms to the delivery of inpatient and outpatient care provided by hospitals. While the hospital community agrees that an emphasis on outpatient services, primary, and preventive care builds a firm foundation for reform and efficiencies in the health care delivery system, we do not agree with the hastened approach the Paterson administration is taking. Further, these reforms combined with the \$82.3 million in outright Medicaid reimbursement cuts to hospitals that the administration recommends in its budget will paralyze the delivery of both inpatient and outpatient care.

The Governor's current budget proposal will force hospitals to eliminate programs and services and reduce staff. The first line of services to be cut will be those associated with outpatient care, the very same services the Governor wants to bolster with his reform effort. Inpatient services are not as easily eliminated, because often inpatient care involves the more acute and critically ill patients. Additionally, the demand for inpatient services will not lessen just because there are more outpatient services available.

Hospitals are the primary care provider for many Long Islanders through health clinics and outpatient departments. If the Governor insists on reforming health care by cutting funding for hospitals, he will only succeed in reducing the availability of primary and preventive care.

I ask readers to keep these facts in mind during the final days before the state legislature draws up its budget. Consider what your life would be like if the mammography suite at your local hospital were to close, other outpatient-based radiology services were no longer available at your community hospital, or your hospital's satellite dialysis center were to shut its doors. Your needs would still be there, but the services would not.

Think also of the health care workers who would lose their jobs and the residual damage your community would feel if its hospitals could no longer support local business and industry.

Urge your state senator and assembly representative to consider your needs and the needs of all your fellow Long Islanders. An easy place to start is www.helpyourhospital.org - a user-friendly, zip code driven website that provides a dollar and cents view of how you and your community will be affected if the Governor's plans for hospitals are enacted.

Sincerely,

Kevin W. Dahill
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